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Immediate Release

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Environment Department Receives Official Notice of Federal Funding for Improved WIPP Oversight; Resumes to be Accepted Friday in Carlsbad

(Santa Fe, NM) — New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Secretary Ron Curry today received official notice from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) that his request for \$600,000 in federal funds to reopen the NMED's DOE Oversight Bureau (DOE OB) office in Carlsbad have been granted. This formal "Notice of Financial Assistance Award" is the official word that these funds are on their way to New Mexico. Due to federal funding cuts, this office was closed in 1996.

With these funds, NMED will hire seven new employees in the Carlsbad in the coming weeks. Personnel to be hired by NMED include one office manager, five technical staff and an administrative assistant. Veterans of the recently closed Environmental Evaluation Group (EEG) office are encouraged to apply. NMED hopes to have this office open by late summer.

NMED senior staff, including Secretary Ron Curry, Water and Waste Management Division Director Charles Lundstrom and DOE OB Chief Courte Voorhees will be in Carlsbad on Friday to answer questions on this and other environmental issues. Interested applicants can drop off resumes and ask questions during NMED's planned public meeting on **Friday from 9 to 11 am at New Mexico State University Carlsbad Campus, Room 153, 1500 University Drive.**

"With these funds in hand, we plan to get these people hired quickly," said Secretary Curry. "These personnel are going to have a marked impact both on our local presence in Carlsbad and our oversight of the WIPP facility. These seven new NMED employees will do vital work, looking over WIPP's shoulder and making sure that this operation is run safely and properly."

NMED's DOE OB currently operates at Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories. At these sites, DOE OB personnel engage in non-regulatory oversight and scientific studies of environmental and worker safety issues. At Los Alamos, work has included groundbreaking studies of contaminants like perchlorate, PCBs and plutonium runoff since the Cerro Grande fire. The DOE OB is funded through an Agreement in Principal (AIP) with DOE. Staff at WIPP will work on similar issues and operate under the same agreement.

The regulatory role of NMED's Hazardous Waste Bureau in permitting and enforcement issues at WIPP will remain unchanged.

For further information contact Jon Goldstein, Communications Director, NMED at (505) 827-0314.

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